

Public
Record

Dear Representative Fawcett:

Thank you for your email about the February 14 March for Change and the hearings on gun violence, school safety and mental health.

While I am not able to attend the hearings, particularly the hearing on mental health, I would like to submit the statement below by Larry Fricks to the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Hearing.

I served as a DMHAS Regional Administrator in Southwestern CT for 15 years (including many meetings at the former Fairfield Hills Hospital in Newtown) and created and directed its Education and Training Division; I was also the founder of the MERGE Mental Health Certificate Program at Housatonic Community College, which successfully prepared students, including individuals with psychiatric histories, for employment in the mental health field. The program continues today at Norwalk and Capital Community Colleges. I have worked for over 15 years as an educator and consultant focusing on behavioral health workforce development. The importance of public education, suicide and illness prevention, early intervention, and welcoming services cannot be over-emphasized. I have seen the positive results of "peers" – individuals with lived experience of mental health conditions – helping others become more hopeful and taking charge of their health and employment opportunities. Larry Fricks comments below speak from the heart and very directly about these issues. I respectfully request that this information be entered into the record of the mental health hearing January 29th.

Thank you for your consideration; please feel free to contact me if I may be of any assistance. (See information below following my signature)

Sincerely,
Jessica Wolf, Ph.D.

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Below is Larry Fricks' inspiring and timely remarks. Larry's off script testimony is even more compelling and heartfelt: see it at <http://www.c-span.org/Events/Experts-Testify-on-State-of-the-US-Mental-Health-System/10737437542-1/>